



africa & madagascar

"meeting the challenge"

Albertine Rift Montane Forests Ecoregion Programme



1. Background

The Albertine Rift Montane Forests Ecoregion is an area of exceptional faunal and floral endemism. These afro-montane forests also support many endangered species such as the Mountain and Eastern Lowland gorillas (*Gorilla beringei beringei* and *G. b. graueri*), which are among the most charismatic flagship species in Africa, and an effective target for much of the current conservation investment in the area.

The mountain chain comprising the Albertine Rift straddles the borders of five different nations: Democratic Republic of Congo (over 70% of the Ecoregion), Uganda (20%), Rwanda (6%), Burundi (3%) and Tanzania (1%).

The Albertine Rift has been identified by all key international conservation NGOs as a top priority area for biodiversity conservation in Africa and the Ecoregion is a priority Ecoregion for WWF-International.

Duration:

Current phase is 5 years, from 2001 to 2005.

Funding Status:

Partly funded by WWF-DK and SE (25%); the remaining is yet to be funded (currently covered through Direct Cost Recovery).

Executing Agency:

WWF Eastern Africa Regional Programme Office (WWF EARPO).

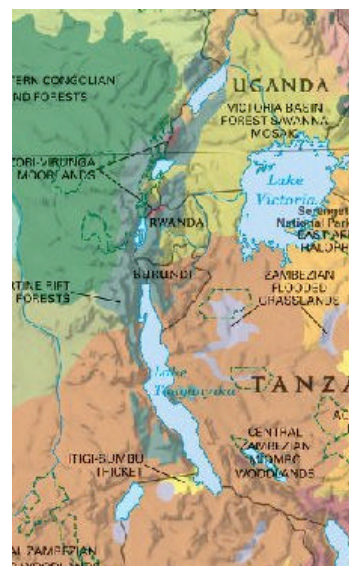
2. Goal and Objectives

The Goal of the Albertine Rift Ecoregion Programme is to ensure the long-term conservation of the Albertine Rift Montane Forests and other important interconnected ecosystems. The objectives are:

- ? To develop a strategic framework for conservation efforts in the ecoregion with a wide variety of stakeholders
- ? To implement and co-ordinate a set of comprehensive and inter-related field projects in the Albertine Rift
- ? To support national authorities in the planning and management of protected areas and buffer zones

3. Achievements

- ? Strategic planning process well underway, in partnership with 7 other NGOs and institutions
- ? Biodiversity assessment and priority setting for conservation effort done
- ? 4 current project reinforced and 4 new projects developed
- ? 3 transboundary and/or regional projects in place



Location of the Albertine Rift
Montane Forests Ecoregion

4. Perspectives

- ? With the return of peace in DRC, strong development of field projects in eastern DRC is taking place. The surroundings of Virunga National Park remain a priority but work at larger scale (in particular forest landscape restoration and species conservation at the ecoregional level) will be developed.
- ? More detailed analysis of threats (incl. root cause analysis) and policy framework across the Albertine Rift will be undertaken.
- ? WWF will resume its activities in the Ruwenzori massif under a transboundary initiative and strengthen its work in Rwanda (Gishwati) and Burundi (Kibira).
- ? WWF will work with ICCN and WCS to develop scenarios for conservation in Itombwe. WWF will also work to protect the watershed of Lake Tanganyika around Uvira (DRC).
- ? Finally, the AR Programme will play a significant role in the GEF Initiative on Conservation of the Albertine Rift Forests, in Ruwenzori and in Kasyoha-Kitomi.



*A male Mountain Gorilla
in the Virunga volcanoes*

5. Needs

- ? For the moment most initiatives are still local and/or national and the recent political situation has not been very conducive for true Ecoregional, trans-boundary initiatives; although significant progress has been made recently, there is need to develop and strengthen the programme at the whole Ecoregional scale.
- ? Staff will require training in different areas relevant to Ecoregion Based Conservation (in particular GIS).
- ? The Albertine Rift Ecoregion Programme itself, and some key projects, in particular the Kahuzi-Biega Conservation Programme, are in urgent need of financial support.

6. Contacts

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*Waterfall in the Ruwenzori,
part of two key protected
areas in the Albertine Rift:
Virunga National Park and
Ruwenzori National Park*